

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. A system for managing subscriptions to commodity items, comprising:

means for receiving customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to said commodity items, said open-ended subscriptions expiring only upon request of respective customers;

means for storing said received customer orders;

means for generating supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said commodity items based upon said stored customer orders; and

means for transmitting said supplier orders to respective suppliers of said commodity items.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said customer orders include customer name, customer address, customer payment information, and information specifying particular commodity items for the open-ended subscriptions.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the means for generating supplier orders comprises:

a first database storing commodity data;

a second database storing supplier data of suppliers of the commodity items; and

means for correlating the commodity data and the supplier data with the customer orders.

4. The system according to claim 1, wherein the means for receiving customer orders comprises a data terminal for allowing an operator to enter customer order data.

5. The system according to claim 1, wherein the means for receiving customer orders comprises means for receiving payment for the open-ended subscriptions.

6. The system according to claim 1, wherein the means for generating supplier orders comprises:

means for checking billing statuses of the renewable term subscriptions for the commodity items; and

means for transmitting payment to those suppliers whose corresponding billing statuses indicate that payment is due.

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7. A method of managing subscriptions to commodity items, comprising the steps of:

- receiving customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to said commodity items, said open-ended subscriptions expiring only upon request of respective customers;
- storing said received customer orders;
- generating supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said commodity items based upon said stored customer orders; and
- transmitting said supplier orders to respective suppliers of said commodity items.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein said customer orders include customer name, customer address, customer payment information, and information specifying particular commodity items for the open-ended subscriptions.

9. The method according to claim 7, wherein the step of generating supplier orders comprises the substeps of:

- accessing commodity data;
- accessing supplier data of suppliers of the commodity items; and
- correlating the commodity data and the supplier data with the customer orders.

10. The method according to claim 7, wherein the step of receiving customer orders comprises entering customer order data into a data terminal.

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11. The method according to claim 7, wherein the step of receiving customer orders comprises the substep of receiving payment for the open-ended subscriptions.

12. The method according to claim 7, wherein the step of generating supplier orders comprises the substeps of:

checking billing statuses of the renewable term subscriptions for the commodity items; and

transmitting payment to those suppliers whose corresponding billing statuses indicate that payment is due.

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13. An article of manufacture for causing a computer to manage subscriptions to commodity items, comprising:

means for causing a computer to receive customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to said commodity items, said open-ended subscriptions expiring only upon request of respective customers;

means for causing a computer to store said received customer orders;

means for causing a computer to generate supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said commodity items based upon said stored customer orders; and

means for causing a computer to transmit said supplier orders to respective suppliers of said commodity items.

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14. A system for providing open-ended subscriptions to commodity items, comprising:

a first database storing customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to said commodity items;

a second database storing information relating to renewable term subscriptions through which said commodity items are available from respective suppliers; and

means for correlating said customers orders in said first database with information stored in said second database and for generating supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said commodity items based upon said correlation.

15. The system according to claim 14, further comprising means for receiving from customers cancellations of the open-ended subscriptions and means for canceling from suppliers the renewable term subscriptions corresponding to the canceled open-ended subscriptions.

16. The system according to claim 14, further comprising:
means for checking billing statuses of the renewable term subscriptions;
and

means for transmitting payment to the suppliers of the commodity items for the renewable term subscriptions whose billing status indicates that payment is due.

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17. A method of providing open-ended subscriptions to commodity items, comprising the steps of:

storing in a first database customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to said commodity items;

storing in a second database information relating to renewable term subscriptions through which said commodity items are available from respective suppliers;

correlating said customers orders in said first database with information stored in said second database; and

generating supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said commodity items based upon said correlation.

18. The method according to claim 17, further comprising the steps of: receiving from customers cancellations of the open-ended subscriptions; and

cancelling from suppliers the renewable term subscriptions corresponding to the canceled open-ended subscriptions.

19. The system according to claim 17, further comprising the steps of: checking billing statuses of the renewable term subscriptions; and transmitting payment to the suppliers of the commodity items for the renewable term subscriptions whose billing status indicates that payment is due.

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20. An article of manufacture for causing a computer to provide open-ended subscriptions to commodity items, comprising:

means for causing a computer to store customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to said commodity items;

means for causing a computer to store information relating to renewable term subscriptions through which said commodity items are available from respective suppliers; and

means for causing a computer to correlate said customers orders in said first database with information stored in said second database and to generate supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said commodity items based upon said correlation.

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21. A system for providing a subscription-based commodity item, comprising:

- means for storing subscription information associated with a plurality of subscription items available on a renewable term basis by a supplier;
- means for storing order information associated with orders for selected ones of said plurality of subscription items on a continuous basis; and
- means for correlating the subscription information and the order information to generate appropriate renewable term subscription orders.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein fields of said subscription information include:

- subscription term;
- agent cost; and
- subscription identifier; and

wherein fields of said order information include:

- order date,
- buyer cost,
- billing period, and
- billing account.

23. The system according to claim 21, further comprising:

- means for receiving from consumers cancellations of the open-ended subscriptions; and
- means for canceling from the suppliers the term subscriptions corresponding to the canceled open-ended subscriptions.

24. The system according to claim 21, further comprising:
means for checking a billing status of a renewable term subscription; and
means for transmitting payment to a supplier for the term subscription,
when the renewable term subscription's billing status indicates that payment is
due.

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25. A method of providing a subscription-based commodity item, comprising the steps of:

- storing subscription information associated with a plurality of subscription items available on a renewable term basis by a supplier;
- storing order information associated with orders for selected ones of said plurality of subscription items on a continuous basis; and
- correlating the subscription information and the order information to generate appropriate renewable term subscription orders.

26. The method according to claim 25 wherein fields of said subscription information include:

- subscription term;
- agent cost; and
- subscription identifier; and

wherein fields of said order information include:

- order date,
- buyer cost,
- billing period, and
- billing account.

27. The method according to claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

- receiving from consumers cancellations of the open-ended subscriptions;
- and
- canceling from the suppliers the term subscriptions corresponding to the canceled open-ended subscriptions.

28. The method according to claim 25, further comprising the steps of:
checking a billing status of a renewable term subscription; and
transmitting payment to a supplier for the term subscription, when the
renewable term subscription's billing status indicates that payment is due.

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29. An article of manufacture for causing a computer to provide a subscription-based commodity item, comprising:

means for causing a computer to store subscription information associated with a plurality of subscription items available on a renewable term basis by a supplier;

means for causing a computer to store order information associated with orders for selected ones of said plurality of subscription items on a continuous basis; and

means for causing a computer to correlate the subscription information and the order information to generate appropriate renewable term subscription orders.

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Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	Normality
Age	35.5	10.5	18	65	0.1	3.2	0.98
Gender	0.5	0.5	0	1	0.0	0.0	0.99
Marital Status	0.7	0.5	0	1	0.0	0.0	0.99
Education	12.5	2.5	8	16	0.1	3.2	0.98
Income	1500	500	500	3000	0.1	3.2	0.98
Occupation	1.5	1.5	1	5	0.0	0.0	0.99
Health Status	0.8	0.4	0	1	0.0	0.0	0.99
Stress Level	3.5	1.5	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Life Satisfaction	4.0	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Resilience	3.0	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Optimism	3.5	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Emotional Stability	3.0	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Self-Esteem	3.5	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Life Satisfaction	4.0	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Resilience	3.0	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Optimism	3.5	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Emotional Stability	3.0	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98
Self-Esteem	3.5	1.0	1	5	0.1	3.2	0.98

an identifier for said publisher,
an identifier for said magazine,
a subscription term for said magazine, and
an agent cost for said magazine;

an identifier for said customer,
an identifier for said magazine,
an order date,
a billing period,
a customer cost, and
a billing account; and

31. The system according to claim 30, further comprising:

means for receiving from consumers cancellations of the open-ended subscriptions; and

means for canceling from the suppliers the term subscriptions corresponding to the canceled open-ended subscriptions.

32. The system according to claim 30, further comprising:

means for checking a billing status of a renewable term subscription; and

means for transmitting payment to a supplier for the term subscription, when the renewable term subscription's billing status indicates that payment is due.

33. The system according to claim 30, further comprising means for requesting suppression of renewal notices for a magazine subscription from a publisher to a customer.

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34. A method of offering open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising:

storing in a first database subscription information associated with a plurality of magazines supplied by a plurality of publishers on a renewable term basis, said subscription information including

- an identifier for said publisher,
- an identifier for said magazine,
- a subscription term for said magazine, and
- an agent cost for said magazine;

storing in a second database customer order information associated with customer orders for continuous subscriptions to said magazines, said customer order information including

- an identifier for said customer,
- an identifier for said magazine,
- an order date,
- a billing period,
- a customer cost, and
- a billing account; and

correlating said subscription information stored in said first database with said customer order information stored in said second database; and

generating supplier orders for renewable term subscriptions to said magazines based upon said correlation.

35. The method according to claim 34, further comprising the steps of:

receiving from consumers cancellations of the open-ended subscriptions;
and
canceling from the suppliers the term subscriptions corresponding to the
canceled open-ended subscriptions.

36. The method according to claim 34, further comprising:
checking a billing status of a renewable term subscription; and
transmitting payment to a supplier for the term subscription, when the
renewable term subscription's billing status indicates that payment is due.

37. The system according to claim 34, further comprising the step of
requesting suppression of renewal notices for a magazine subscription from a
publisher to a customer.

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38. A system for offering open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising:

- means for receiving a subscription order from a customer for the purchase of at least one open-ended magazine subscription;
- means for creating an order record based upon the subscription order and storing the order record in an order database;
- mean for calculating a first payment amount from the order record; and
- means for transmitting the calculated first payment amount to a payment clearinghouse.

39. The system according to claim 38, wherein the means for receiving a subscription order comprises a data terminal for allowing an operator to enter data relating to the subscription order.

40. The system according to claim 38, further comprising means for creating a subscription record corresponding to the order record to initiate a renewable term subscription from a magazine supplier.

41. A method of offering open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising the steps of:

- receiving a subscription order from a customer for the purchase of at least one open-ended magazine subscription;
- creating an order record based upon the subscription order and storing the order record in an order database;
- calculating a first payment amount from the order record; and
- transmitting the calculated first payment amount to a payment clearinghouse.

42. The method according to claim 41, wherein the step of receiving a subscription order comprises the substep of entering data relating to the subscription order into a data terminal.

43. The method according to claim 41, further comprising the step of creating a subscription record corresponding to the order record to initiate a renewable term subscription from a magazine supplier.

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44. A system for ordering magazines through open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising:

a first database storing subscription information relating to a plurality of renewable term subscriptions for magazines from respective publishers;

a second database storing order information relating to customer orders for selected ones of said magazines on an open-ended basis;

a third database storing publisher information relating to each of said plurality of publishers; and

means for selecting information from said first, second, and third databases to create subscription orders for initiating renewable term magazine subscriptions from respective publishers to respective customers.

45. The system according to claim 44, further comprising means for transmitting said subscription records to said publisher to initiate respective magazine subscriptions.

46. The system according to claim 45, further comprising means for transmitting payment to said publisher for said magazine subscriptions.

47. The system according to claim 45, further comprising means for billing said buyer for said subscription.

48. The system according to claim 44, wherein the publisher information includes, for each publisher, a publisher subscription data format, and

wherein the means for selecting comprises means for creating a subscription record in the respective publisher subscription data format.

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49. A method of ordering magazines through open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising the steps of:

storing in a first database subscription information relating to a plurality of renewable term subscriptions for magazines from respective publishers;

storing in a second database order information relating to customer orders for selected ones of said magazines on an open-ended basis;

storing in a third database publisher information relating to each of said plurality of publishers; and

selecting information from said first, second, and third databases to create subscription orders for initiating renewable term magazine subscriptions from respective publishers to respective customers.

50. The method according to claim 49, further comprising the step of transmitting said subscription records to said publisher to initiate respective magazine subscriptions.

51. The method according to claim 50, further comprising the step of transmitting payment to said publisher for said magazine subscriptions.

52. The method according to claim 50, further comprising the step of billing said buyer for said subscription.

53. The method according to claim 49, wherein the publisher information includes, for each publisher, a publisher subscription data format, and

wherein the step of selecting comprises the substep of creating a subscription record in the respective publisher subscription data format.

54. A system for providing open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising:
a first database storing subscription information relating to a renewable term subscription to a magazine offered by a magazine publisher, said renewable term subscription including a subscription term;

a second database storing order information relating to a customer order for an open-ended subscription to said magazine;

means for periodically checking a billing status of said renewable term subscription; and

means for submitting payment for said renewable term subscription when said billing status indicates that said term subscription requires renewal.

55. The system according to claim 54, further including means, responsive to said subscription term status check, for initiating renewals of said renewable term subscriptions when said subscription terms have expired.

56. The system according to claim 55, further including means for transmitting payment for said subscription renewals.

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57. A method of providing open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising the steps of:

storing in a first database subscription information relating to a renewable term subscription to a magazine offered by a magazine publisher;

storing in a second database order information relating to a customer order for an open-ended subscription to said magazine, said order information including a billing period;

periodically checking a billing status of said renewable term subscription; and

submitting payment for said renewable term subscription when said billing status indicates that said term subscription requires renewal.

58. The method according to claim 57, further including the step of initiating, responsive to said subscription term status check, renewals of said renewable term subscriptions when said subscription terms have expired.

59. The method according to claim 58, further including the step of transmitting payment for said subscription renewals.

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60. A system for providing open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising:
a first database storing subscription information relating to renewable term subscriptions to magazines offered by magazine publishers;
a second database storing order information relating to customer orders for open-ended subscriptions to respective magazines, said order information including a billing period for each open-ended subscription; and
means for generating and transmitting invoices for said open-ended subscriptions to respective customers for respective billing periods.

61. The system according to claim 60, wherein the means for generating comprises means for identifying every open-ended subscription for a customer and for synchronizing the billing periods of the identified open-ended subscriptions.

62. The system according to claim 61, wherein the means for generating further comprises means for transmitting a single invoice to each customer.

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63. A method of providing open-ended magazine subscriptions, comprising:
storing in a first database subscription information relating to renewable term
subscriptions to magazines offered by magazine publishers;

storing in a second database order information relating to customer orders for
open-ended subscriptions to respective magazines, said order information including a
billing period for each open-ended subscription; and

generating and transmitting invoices for said open-ended subscriptions to
respective customers for respective billing periods.

64. The method according to claim 63, wherein the step of generating
comprises the substeps of identifying every open-ended subscription for a customer and
synchronizing the billing periods of the identified open-ended subscriptions.

65. The method according to claim 64, wherein the step of generating further
comprises the substep of transmitting a single invoice for each customer.

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66. A system for providing open-ended subscriptions to magazines, comprising:

means for accessing information about a renewable term subscription to a magazine;

means for storing magazine and publisher information related to said magazine;

means for receiving a customer order requesting conversion of the renewable term subscription to an open-ended subscription from an agent;

means for generating an order record containing information for the open-ended subscription;

means for generating a renewable term subscription order containing instructions suppressing mailing of renewable notices to the customer; and

means for transmitting the renewable term subscription order to the magazine publisher.

67. The system according to claim 66, wherein the means for generating the renewable term subscription order comprises means for generating a renewable term subscription order indicating that the agent is responsible for payment for the renewable term subscription.

68. The system according to claim 66, wherein the means for generating an order record comprises means for extracting customer information from the accessed information about the renewable term subscription.

69. The system according to claim 68, wherein the means for generating an order record further comprises means for extracting information from the stored magazine and publisher information.

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70. A method of providing open-ended subscriptions to magazines, comprising the steps of:

accessing information about a renewable term subscription to a magazine;
storing magazine and publisher information related to said magazine;
receiving a customer order requesting conversion of the renewable term subscription to an open-ended subscription from an agent;
generating an order record containing information for the open-ended subscription;
generating a renewable term subscription order containing instructions suppressing mailing of renewable notices to the customer; and
transmitting the renewable term subscription order to the magazine publisher.

71. The method according to claim 70, wherein the step of generating the renewable term subscription order comprises the substep of generating a renewable term subscription order indicating that the agent is responsible for payment for the renewable term subscription.

72. The method according to claim 70, wherein the step of generating an order record comprises the substep of extracting customer information from the accessed information about the renewable term subscription.

73. The method according to claim 72, wherein the step of generating an order record further comprises the substep of extracting information from the stored magazine and publisher information.

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